

## Newsletter

### Compassion for People and Pets in Disasters

Tom has introduced legislation to ensure that in any future disaster, federal officials will not separate people from their household pets and service animals such as seeing-eye dogs, as they did in the wake of

Hurricane Katrina.

The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS Act, H.R. 3858), requires local and state emergency preparedness authorities to include procedures in their

evacuation plans to accommodate household pets or service animals in case of a disaster. Local and state authorities must submit these plans in order to qualify for grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"The devastation in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama brought unbelievable images into American homes every night," Tom said. "The losses of life and property were simply staggering. And on top of all that, the sight of evacuees choosing between being rescued or remaining with their pets, perhaps even having to leave behind the trained and faithful helping animals that some people with disabilities rely on every day, was just heartbreaking. Our legislation will put an end to that."

Tom is a cosponsor of a dozen bills addressing issues raised by the Gulf Coast disaster. Among these bills are measures to give Medicaid to those affected by the disaster, to provide additional funds to local and educational agencies to support elementary and secondary schools for displaced students, to assist vulnerable children in foster care by providing states maintenance payments on behalf of foster children in areas affected by the hurricane, and to let natural disaster victims declare bankruptcy as needed without having to enter newly-enacted repayment programs.



*Safeguarding our pets - Tom authored the PETS Act to require state and local officials to include household pets and service animals in their evacuation plans. He introduced the bill with the help of his furry friend Macko and Howard Nelson, Executive Director of the Washington D.C. Humane Society, shown here holding Frankie and Rosie, two dogs rescued in the nick of time from a flooded street corner in New Orleans.*

### San Mateo County's Youth-Friendly Programs Are Now Nationally Recognized

On Tom's recommendation, San Mateo County this year competed for and won a coveted spot on a national list of the 100 best communities for young people as determined by the non-profit America's Promise.

"The people of San Mateo County do so much to ensure that the next generation can have an even better life than we now enjoy," Tom said. "It is gratifying to know that such efforts can gain recognition, which will pay further dividends as the word spreads about how hard our county works for its young people. It has been a privilege to help work toward improving conditions for our youth, and it was a pleasure to point the way for San Mateo County to win this well-deserved award."

San Mateo County made the list of the "100 Best Communities for Young People" after a lengthy application process and independent evaluation by America's Promise, a national alliance of more than 400 foundations, corporations and youth service organizations founded by former Secretary of State Colin Powell and headed by his wife, Alma.

The award recognizes the work and

accomplishments of partnerships between the public sector, businesses and nonprofits. San Mateo County was selected in part because of enterprising projects such as Preschool for All, which works to provide access for all three- and four-year-olds to quality care and education; the San Mateo

County Children's Health Initiative, which aims to ensure that all children through age 18 have comprehensive health insurance coverage; and the Shared Vision 2010 initiative, which is helping define the shared values of the county's various communities in order to create a better future for all.

#### In Case of Emergency - Be Prepared

The organizations below have a lot of helpful information about disaster preparedness. Please note that in the event of any emergency, the first phone number to call is 911.

**California Office of Emergency Services**  
Warning Center - (916) 845-8911  
San Mateo Area Office - (650) 363-4790  
San Francisco Area Office - (415) 558-2700

**CHP**  
State Office - Sacramento - (916) 657-8287  
San Mateo/San Francisco - (415) 557-1094  
[www.chp.ca.gov](http://www.chp.ca.gov)

**MUNI**  
Main Line - 415-673-MUNI (6864)  
[www.sfmuni.com](http://www.sfmuni.com)

**SAMTRANS and Caltrain**  
Main Line - (800) 660-4287  
Administrative Offices - (650) 508-7744  
[www.samtrans.com](http://www.samtrans.com)

**BART**  
San Mateo/South San Francisco/San Bruno - (650) 992-2278  
San Francisco/Daly City - (415) 989-2278  
[www.bart.gov](http://www.bart.gov)

More information is available at  
[www.72hours.com](http://www.72hours.com)



# Local Stem Cell Research Facilities Discuss Advances and Future Funding

To highlight advances in stem cell research in San Francisco and on the Peninsula and the need for further federal funding, Tom visited various local organizations that conduct research using adult and embryonic stem cells.

Starting off at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), the primary facility in his congressional district conducting stem cell research, Tom received a briefing from Dr. Susan Fisher, who is working to derive human embryonic stem cell lines using new techniques that would make them eligible under Food and Drug Administration standards for transplantation into people. He also met with UCSF Diabetes Center Clinical Director Dr. Michael German, whose studies of the cells that produce insulin may one day point the way

to new means of treating diabetes.

He then toured two private companies on the Peninsula that conduct cutting-edge research involving stem cells. He heard from executives and researchers at VistaGen Therapeutics, Inc., a Burlingame biopharmaceutical company developing drugs for disorders of the central nervous system and diabetes, using in vitro embryonic stem cell technologies. Then came a visit to San Carlos-based Cellerant Therapeutics, Inc., a company using adult stem cell research to develop therapies for seriously ill patients with blood disorders, autoimmune diseases, and cancer, as well as treatments for radiation exposure from nuclear incidents.

Tom advocated the passage last year of Proposition 71, which supported the devel-

opment of lifesaving therapies and cures involving research on stem cells for numerous illnesses afflicting Californians.

In May he voted for the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005 (H.R. 810), which requires the federal government to conduct and support research that utilizes human embryonic stem cells provided such embryos: (1) have been donated from in vitro fertilization clinics; (2) were created for the purposes of fertility treatment; (3) were in excess of the needs of the individuals seeking such treatment and would never be implanted in a woman and would otherwise be discarded (as determined in consultation with the individuals seeking fertility treatment); and (4) were donated by such individuals with written informed consent and without any financial or other inducements.

## Meeting With Health Care Leaders

Quality health care is one of the Peninsula's top priorities, and ought to be at the top of the national agenda. This fall Tom met with leading officials from 15 hospitals and clinics and San Mateo County Health Department authorities to discuss health care issues of special concern to the Bay Area, including Medicare reimbursement, the availability of vaccines to stop pandemics, low-cost prescription drugs, and the need to attract new physicians to the region.

Health care costs are continuing to skyrocket, and millions of Americans are worried whether adequate care will be available when they need it. One in six Americans has no health insurance, and millions more are under-insured.

"While we are blessed to have the most advanced health care system in the world, we continue to face increasing costs, and many people have trouble finding care," Tom said.

After his meeting with health care leaders, Tom toured the non-profit, state-of-the-art Dorothy E. Schneider Cancer Center at the Mills Health Center.



**Scientific progress - Dr. Michael German of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) shows Tom around the lab facilities where pathbreaking research using adult stem cells is done, as they discuss the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005.**

## Bringing the U.N. Home

*In September the United Nations convened a historic, high-level meeting to celebrate the 60th anniversary of its founding and to determine the course of its future. Here are some excerpts from an opinion piece that Tom had published in The San Francisco Chronicle:*

The United Nations will host today the largest-ever gathering of world leaders. Working with our friends in Europe, Asia and around the world, the United States proposes to launch critical U.N. reform initiatives. If adopted, these reforms will make the United Nations more accountable, ethical and efficient, and less vulnerable to hijackings by the rogue states and human rights violators who have so undermined its mission.

The organization's shortcomings have been underscored recently by a succession of distressing scandals involving corruption, mismanagement and sexual abuse. Nevertheless, we must recognize that in the six decades since its founding in San

Francisco, the United Nations has performed magnificently in addressing some of the world's most pressing problems.

The United Nations acts on thousands of human-rights complaints per year and helps establish democracy and the rule of law far and wide. During the last year alone, U.N. representatives provided electoral assistance to more than 20 countries, including Burundi, Iraq and Afghanistan. And the war crimes tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia have restored respect for justice in places where it was thought to have died.

Whether impeding the global narcotics trade, promoting sustainable development or providing life-saving drugs to millions of victims of HIV/AIDS, the United Nations has done things that no individual country could ever have done. But there is much more to do.

The vast inequalities between nations and within them continue to stoke resent-

ments that our enemies exploit in order to fuel conflicts. More than a billion people around the world live on less than a dollar a day. Genocide grinds on in the Darfur region of Sudan, violence against women remains endemic in scores of places, and tyrants continue to terrorize far too many people. All of these problems, and more, demand a reinvigorated United Nations.

The summit of heads of state and government in New York this week represents a chance for countries to rededicate themselves to furthering the United Nations' original purposes, and to ending such new menaces as the international financing of terrorism. The summit can present a template to strengthen and to restore credibility to a historically unique, global force for good. The Bush administration has told us that John Bolton, as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, is the right person to get the job done in New York; it's time for him to show us that he is.



# Helping Our Schools Make the Grade

Staying on top of what is happening in our schools is an important part of community leadership. Tom recently met with the superintendents and board members of eight local school districts to discuss the challenges they face in the current funding environment and the achievements their schools have made despite these struggles.

"Educators on the Peninsula and in San Francisco have done heroic things to bring our students the top quality learning opportunities they deserve," he said. "Only well-educated citizens can maintain our democratic form of government and cope with the challenge of an increasingly complicated world with knowledge and creativity. Our public schools are doing their utmost to uphold their goals under often trying circumstances."

Tom taught economics in the Bay Area for 30 years before being elected to Congress and served on the board of the Millbrae School District. He has a long-standing sense of commitment to ensuring adequate support for public schools.

"When Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, we struck a bipartisan bargain that the Administration has since failed to keep," he said. "In the intervening four years, the federal government has provided \$40 billion less to school districts than



**Bearcat pride** - Tom discussed recent Congressional legislation supporting schools at the dedication this fall of the new San Mateo High School, which was completely rebuilt to make it seismically safe. He presented to Principal Jacqueline McEvoy a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol on the day the new buildings opened. Also in the front row are Superintendent Samuel Johnson, Jr. and Superintendent-retired Thomas C. Mohr, for whom the new school clock tower is named.

they should have received under the law."

In addition to full funding for programs under No Child Left Behind, Tom supports funding increases for long-standing core elements of our public school system, such as

programs for special education. He is also a co-sponsor of the Teach Act (H.R. 2835), which provides financial incentives for new teachers to serve in high-need schools and fields where there are teacher shortages.

## Making Sense of New Medicare Choices

Starting January 1, Medicare will offer prescription drug coverage through new private drug plans and managed care plans, now called "Medicare Advantage" plans.

Because enrollment choices need to be made in the coming months, and because the information on the new options is complex, many have expressed confusion and a sense of pressure to make decisions on these plans. But it is very important to seek informed advice about the available choices whether you are a senior, a person with a disability or someone trying to help a parent or friend with these decisions. Most people have until May 15, 2006 to sign up for a plan before late enrollment penalties apply, so please take your time, check your facts and know your options.

There are many important dates to remember in the new Medicare Drug Benefit (Part D) prescription drug plan.

Those who participate in Medicare should have begun receiving information in October on locally-available drug plans. Unfortunately, the government-issued "Medicare and You" booklet had significant errors and the Administration determined that the corrected information will not be mailed, but it is available at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) and by phone at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

The enrollment period for Medicare Part D started in November. In order for coverage to begin in January 2006, you must enroll by December 31, 2005. May 15, 2006 is the last day to enroll in a Medicare drug plan without incurring an additional 1% per month premium surcharge, and it is the last day to enroll to receive any benefits in 2006.

The open enrollment period for prescription drug benefits for 2007 begins on November 15, 2006. This is also the first

opportunity for those who enrolled in a Medicare drug plan for 2006 to switch plans if they wish.

Tom opposed the law establishing this new system when Congress passed it in late 2003 because he believed it had many shortcomings, that it was overly complex and it favored the pharmaceutical industry and HMOs rather than Medicare beneficiaries. Nevertheless, seniors and other participants in the Medicare program must now seek out the information necessary to navigate the new plan and to make the best decisions about whether to join and what plan best meets their needs.

### Where You Can Learn More

For further information on the changes to Medicare, contact these organizations:

Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program: 1-800-434-0222  
[www.calmedicare.org](http://www.calmedicare.org)

Medicare:  
1-800-MEDICARE (633-4227)  
[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)

Social Security Administration:  
1-800-772-1213  
[www.ssa.gov/prescriptionhelp](http://www.ssa.gov/prescriptionhelp)

Callers should have this information at hand:

- Medicare identification number (on the Medicare card)
- Current prescriptions, including dosage, and how much they cost
- Refill schedule



**Combating the trafficking in illegal arms** - Tom recently arranged a screening on Capitol Hill of "Lord of War," which concerns the devastating impact of the international arms trade. Here he speaks about human rights with the film's writer and director, Andrew Nicol, and actor Ethan Hawke. Rep. Patrick Kennedy is in the background.



## Ombudsman

# Helping a Neighbor Cut Through the Red Tape

Tom has just helped a long-time constituent cut through a thicket of red tape in order to obtain his passport.

Recently retired from teaching college, the man wanted to travel abroad with his wife for the first time. But since his birth name was changed after he was adopted decades ago, and the adoption had been sealed, he did not have the proof of identity that federal officials needed to process a passport request.

He got in touch with Tom's San Mateo office, which tracked down the right people at county, state and federal agencies to take an interest in the case.

After four months of effort, authorities finally were persuaded to unseal the adoption and to verify the would-be traveler's identity. Now he and his wife are planning their first foreign trip - to Canada, "a baby step at the start," as he said.

## How Can I Help You?

### Internet

[www.house.gov/lantos](http://www.house.gov/lantos)

### California

San Mateo County telephone:

(650) 342-0300

San Francisco telephone:

(415) 566-5257

### Washington D.C.

Telephone:

(202) 225-3531

2413 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515



*Sharing the joy - Tom presents a congressional certificate of appreciation to Project Manager AnMarie Rodgers for her work on the Glen Park Community Plan as Supervisor Bevan Dufty and Michael Rice, President of the Glen Park Association, look on. Tom secured \$3.4 million in for the project in the recently passed transportation bill.*



*New outreach staffer - Welcome aboard to Christine Vanessa Padilla, a new field representative with deep local roots. Her dedication and commitment to community building make her the ideal person for the San Mateo office's Filipino and other Asian community outreach. Christine is also a consultant to a number of community enterprises, including the annual Asian Heritage Street Celebration, First Thursdays, and Asian Improv aRts. She holds a degree in American Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz.*

**TOM LANTOS**  
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*Tom Lantos* M.C.

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